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ABSTRACT

The first of two papers on individualized instruction notes that with the ever increasing demands for larger classes it is becoming more important for parents to make sure their child receives an education that will meet his or her individual needs. Children have to understand what they read and understand what they do not read but infer from their reading. Children have to write in correct sentences and unified paragraphs and think so they will have ideas to write about. Wilbur Brookover, author of "Creating Effective Schools," says that teachers should "identify a clear and measurable set of skill objectives for the course. Planning, teaching, and evaluating should all relate to these objectives." Teachers should balance success levels. Teachers should use praise--though they should use it in moderation. Teachers should also allow time for students to practice recently learned skills and should give additional work to the child who finds the work too easy. If a child finds the work too difficult, teachers must provide extra guidance and support. The second of two papers suggests that parents should also consider following further steps on their own: (1) they should share their interest in individualized instruction with the local PTA; and (2) they should learn more about individualized teaching by visiting the local library. Most schools do not provide the kind of teaching methods that allow children to develop their greatest potential. (TB)

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EFFECTIVE PLANNING FOR INDIVIDUALIZED INSTRUCTION

by REED MARKHAM

ENCOURAGING INDIVIDUALIZED INSTRUCTION

by REED MARKHAM

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TOPIC: EFFECTIVE PLANNING FOR INDIVIDUALIZED INSTRUCTION

BY: REED MARKHAM, PH.D

DATE: FEBRUARY 23, 1995

Do you know what your child's curriculum covers?

What tools of learning should be included in the curriculum?

What should you do if the curriculum is too easy? or too difficult?

With the ever increasing demands for larger classes it is becoming more important for parents to make sure their child receives an education that will meet their individual needs. According to Mary Susan Miller, author of THE SCHOOL BOOK, "children need reading, writing, and arithmetic for starters, but the school can't stop there. Children have to understand what they read and then go further and understand what they don't read but infer from their reading. Children have to write in correct sentences and unified paragraphs, but they have to go further and think so they will have ideas to write about. Children have to decode the language of numbers, but they have to go further and use the logic of the minds and the technology of the computer to reach beyond themselves."

Encourage your teacher to adopt the following strategies for effective ndividualized instruction:

First, develop clear goals. Wilbur Brookover, author of CREATING

EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS says that teachers should "identify a clear and measurable set of skill objectives for the course. Planning, teaching and evaluating should allrelate to these objectives."

Second, teachers should balance success levels. Brookover urges parents to "aim at a balance of high and medium success level in student responses by varying the level of difficulty of questions. For example, the teacher may wish to engage reluctant learners early in the session by starting with questions they can answer easily and then moving them on to more challenging questions."

Third, use praise in moderation. Effective teachers spend time praising correct thinking as well as correct responses. The feeling of accomplishment will help the student to remember the material.

Fourth, practice, practice, practice. Brookover concluded: "At the beginning of any new learning, practice periods should be frequent and closely spaced." Frequent practice sessions will lead to higher test scores for students at all levels.

Fifth, remember that a child who finds the instruction too easy needs additional work. Miller observed: "If your child continually finishes her work before the rest of the class and sits around bored or gets into trouble, you should talk to her teacher and suggest several ways to handle this

situation. The teacher can let your child design a long-term project to work on when she has finished in class. One teacher let a child write and illustrate a book of haiku poems; another put two children to work on making a salt-and-flour model of an early Roman town."

Sixth, if the instruction is too difficult for your child, recommend a plan of reinforcement. Miller suggests that the teacher do the following:

*Give him extra help during school

*Assign another student to work with him

*Give you work with which to help him at home

*Suggest outside tutoring

*Suggest summer school

The secret is to avoid a situation where your child fall behind in their studies. Children who are having difficulty need constant reinforcement.

RESEARCH SUMMARY

Effective individualized instruction involves:

1. Developing clear goals
2. Balancing success levels
3. Use praise
4. Utilize practice sessions

TOPIC: Encouraging Individualized Instruction

BY: Reed Markham, Ph.D

DATE: March 5, 1994

A recent UCLA study indicated that 80 percent of college faculty feel that high school academic preparation today is as poor or worse than it was in the 1970's. According to Mary Susan Miller, author of SAVE OUR SCHOOLS, "Half the members of the freshman class these days consider than high school grades inflated, a fact corroborated by teachers, who admit to inflating grades to keep from failing half the class. So prevalent is the practice that New York State abandoned use of high school grades as a basis for awarding scholarships, returning to the old system of using standardized tests- which is probably worse."

The National Foundation for the Improvement of Education reported that "of the greatest needs in schools cited by America's exceptional teachers, almost half involved individualized instruction. Miller concluded that "the bulk of American teachers must start realizing that they have the most heterogeneous classrooms in the world and that instead of trying to copy homogeneous Japan, they

have to devise ways to reach each member of their diverse group of students. They have to deal with their different religions, abilities, interests, even languages; their different races and cultures, which instill different values and goals and expectations and customs; their different levels of achievement and maturity."

Here are some positive steps to encouraging individualized instruction in your child's school:

First, Share your interest in individualized instruction with your local PTA. Encourage your school's parent support group to support a shift from the traditional class to individualized teaching. A parent support group in the Lagunitas School District in West Marin County, California assisted in the development of three unique elementary school programs- open classroom, Montessori, and an enrichment program.

Second, communicate your interest in individualized instruction to your child's teacher. According to Joy Martin, Assistant Principal of Maple Ementary School in San Bernardino, "children have a chance for success when there is a partnership between the parents and the teacher."

Third, learn more about individualized teaching. Visit your local

library and review the materials on individualized teaching by Jonathan Kozol, Herbert Kohl, and John Glasser.

TIP BOX

Most schools do not provide the kind of teaching methods that allow kids to develop their greatest potential. Parents can help to meet their child's individualized educational needs by:

First, discovering what your child shines in. Howard Gardner, author of FRAMES OF MIND says "the single most important thing in education is for each person to find at least one thing that he or she connects to, gets excited by, feels motivated to spend more time with."

Second, support your child. Gardner suggests that you "observe and support your child when she is having a good time, when she is totally absorbed in a learning activity, or when she shows a real interest in some new subject or experience."